United States Department of Agriculture **Forest Service** **Deschutes National Forest Bend-Ft. Rock Ranger District** **1230 NE 3rd, Suite A-262 Bend, OR 97701 (541) 383-4000**

File Code: 1950
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Dear Reader:

The Forest Service would like to share its plans for the Deadlog Vegetation Management Project. The purpose and need for this project is to restore and maintain fire dependent ecosystems and maintain the forest in a healthy condition as anticipated by the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and its amendments. We are considering treatments that will promote and sustain late and old structured forest stands, reduce susceptibility to bark beetles and dwarf mistletoe infestation, and reduce fuel loading within the Deadlog planning area.

The Deadlog planning area is located in the eastern part of the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District approximately 36 miles southeast of Bend, Oregon. Within the planning area are interesting geologic features including Sixteen, Rogers, and Deadlog Buttes and Quartz Mountain. The planning area is bounded by Forest Road 22 on the north and west, and Forest Road 23 on the east and south. The legal location is in Township 22S Range 15E and Township 23S Ranges 14E and 15E.

Existing Condition

The Deadlog area is dominated by ponderosa pine plant associations, but also includes about 3,000 acres of lodgepole pine plant associations. Large diameter ponderosa pine trees older than 160 years and having old tree characteristics are common on the Deadlog landscape. Brush is common in the understory and usually comprises of bitterbrush or ceanothus and manzanita.

Most ponderosa pine stands in the project area have a well-established understory of young ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine trees. These stands currently are sustaining a higher density of understory trees than they would historically, and are susceptible to bark beetle mortality. Large diameter trees are unable to compete with the younger, more vigorous trees for available resources. In addition, understory trees and brush combined with a high degree of buildup of natural fuels on the forest floor are contributing to the risk of uncharacteristically severe fire behavior, should a wildfire start in the planning area.

Desired Condition

The desired condition is a healthy forest with a significant amount of late and old structured stands. Desired characteristics also include:

- Stand densities that reduce tree weakness and mortality related to insects and dwarf mistletoe, but retain these as desirable agents of a healthy functioning ecosystem;
- Stand densities that encourage the development and maintenance of large diameter trees, open canopy structure;
- An arrangement of natural fuels such that in the event of a wildfire, the fire intensity and rate of spread would allow fire suppression options.

The actions proposed in the Deadlog Vegetation Management Project are intended to move the project area toward the desired condition for the area. Treatments would reduce forest fuels in areas where fuel models indicate a high to moderate risk for stand replacement wildfire. Forest health treatments would reduce stand density to discourage infestation by beetles and slow the rate of spread within areas that are infected with dwarf mistletoe. Forest thinning associated with these treatments would enhance the health and growth of existing large trees as well as the development of future large trees that will contribute to late and old forest structure.

Management Direction
This project is within the area managed under the Revised Interim Management Direction Establishing Riparian, Ecosystem and Wildlife Standards for Timber Sales, also known as the Eastside Screens. The Eastside Screens amend the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Plan (LRMP). The project area is also within the Brothers Wildland Fire Use Plan.

The Deschutes LRMP, as amended by the Eastside Screens, identifies a desire for the landscape to be resistant to uncharacteristically severe insect, disease and wildfire events, and for late and old structured stands to be maintained and/or increased on the landscape.

Project Objectives

- Manage stands of late old structure ponderosa pine to promote sustainability over the long term.
- In dense stands dominated by ponderosa pine return stands toward historic conditions addressing tree species composition, stocking levels and resistance to insects, disease and fire mortality.
- Reduce surface fuels throughout the planning area to levels that will not sustain stand replacement fires.
- Manage lodgepole pine stands to reduce the acres susceptible to bark beetle mortality.
- Reduce potential for the spread of ponderosa pine dwarf mistletoe.

Proposed Activities
Given the project objectives listed above, the Forest Service proposes to employ overstory removal, shelterwood, commercial thinning harvests, small-diameter thinning, mowing, underburning and piling in different combinations across approximately 10,874 acres of the 16,055 acres within Deadlog planning area. A brief description of the planned treatments is as follows:

Harvest Commercial Thin (HTH) - Thinning of trees over 7 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) to reduce susceptibility to bark beetle outbreaks, stabilize dwarf mistletoe infections, reduce competition with larger, older trees, and decrease the continuity of crowns to reduce the likelihood of crown fires. Commercial thinning in the Deadlog project area would be a thinning from below which favors the largest healthy ponderosa pine trees.

Harvest Shelterwood (HSH) - Shelterwood harvest is conducted in stands where natural regeneration of the stand is desired. Overstory trees left in a shelterwood harvest are intended to provide seed and some amelioration of heat and frost for natural regeneration. Within the Deadlog project area, shelterwood harvest is proposed in lodgepole stands that are mature and susceptible to high mortality to mountain pine beetle outbreak.

Harvest Overstory Removal (HOR) - Harvest removal of an overstory is conducted on areas that are intended to be single story stands but currently have an understory of saplings or seedlings. In the Deadlog project area, overstory removal would be used in lodgepole pine stands where the overstory is infected with mistletoe and is in poor condition.

Small-diameter Thin (PCT) - Small-diameter thinning is proposed in two different situations. One is regeneration stands currently stocked with saplings; the other is stands where there is an understory that competes with the overstory and/or acts as a fuel ladder. In the Deadlog project, small-diameter thinning would also be used to manage the understory in stands that have multi-canopy characteristics.

Whip Falling - Whip falling is used in regeneration units to remove remaining non-merchantable trees that are undesirable due to disease or poor condition including small crowns, bole damage or very poor growth. In the Deadlog project area, whip falling is proposed along with shelterwood harvest.

Underburning (UB) - Underburning consists of burning natural fuels and slash in forest stands, and is accomplished during specific weather conditions in order to minimize tree mortality. Underburning would occur as a sole treatment and in combination with other treatments.

Mowing (Mow) - This treatment involves mowing brush in ponderosa pine stands using a tractor equipped with a rotary mower. The targeted brush species are bitterbrush and manzanita. Brush is mowed to a height of 8"; mowing may occur on up to 70 or 80 percent of the area within specified units.

Piling (Pile) – Two types of slash piling are proposed:

Handpiling (HP) consists of piling natural fuels and slash by hand. Completed pile dimensions will be approximately 6ft. long by 6 ft. wide by 5ft. in height. The number of piles per acre may fluctuate with fuel loadings but are expected to occur at a rate of 12 to 24 piles per acre. Piles would be burned in the late fall or winter season when moisture levels prevent fire spreading to surrounding areas.

Machine Piling (MP) consists of using a grapple-equipped machine to pile natural fuels and slash. Pretreatment fuel loading would generally be greater than 16 tons per acre where machine piling is used. Completed pile dimensions would be approximately 12 ft. long by 12 ft. wide by 8 ft. in height and piles would occur at a rate of 4 to 6 piles per acre. Piles would be burned in the late fall or winter season when moisture levels prevent fire spreading to surrounding areas.

Table 1. Acres of Treatment Type

Harvest Type	**Acres**
HOR	156
HSH	368
HTH	6,073
Total Harvest	**6,597**
Stand Improvement Type	
PCT	5,778
Whip	386
Total Stand Improvement	**6,164**
Fuel Treatment Type	
MOW	16
MOW/UB	3,221
PILE/BURN	1,469
PILE/BURN/MOW	460
PILE/BURN/MOW/UB	1,275
PILE/BURN/UB	1,400
UB	2,463
Total Fuels Treatment	**10,294**

The harvest, stand improvement, and fuel treatments will be conducted and arranged in combinations over the project area.

In addition, approximately 420 acres of skyline logging is contemplated on slopes greater than 30 percent within the proposed activities.

Connected Actions

Closely related actions to this project that will be discussed in the environmental assessment include maintenance of existing roads, hazard tree removal, construction of temporary roads, and obliteration of temporary roads following project implementation.

Mitigation Measures

Project design elements and site-specific mitigation measures will be developed during the analysis of individual activity areas for each alternative. Mitigation measures may include seasonal operating restrictions, subsoiling on ground based logging units, one-end suspension of logs will be required if logging occurs on slopes greater than 30 percent, rehabilitation of skyline corridors, road closures, road decommissioning, weed control and monitoring. Proposed machine piling would be conducted from existing roads and skidtrails.

Preliminary Issues Identified

The following is a list of concerns or issues related to the proposed action that the interdisciplinary team has identified. Other issues may arise from this public scoping opportunity.

- *Deer hiding cover* in some parts of the Deadlog planning area is currently below Forest Plan standards (WL-54).

- *Open road density* in the Deadlog planning area exceeds the analysis threshold for analyzing and guidelines for managing open road density within deer summer range (WL-53,TS-12, 13 & 14).

- *Effects on Heritage Resources* – The protection of some prehistoric and historic heritage resource sites from the effects of wildfire is anticipated to required active management of the vegetative and fuel conditions in and near certain sites. However, the active management treatments needed (i.e. prescribed fire) may have some effect on the sites as well. Accruing effects from management treatments in order to provide a greater level of site protection in the long run is an issue.

Proposed Forest Plan Amendment

The management themes contained in the Eastside Screens and the Forest Plan that relate to this project may conflict with the Forest Plan goals for management of big game habitat. Forest Plan Standard WL-54 may not be met if the other management themes for this project are addressed. The Deadlog Interdisciplinary Team will determine if the need exists to recommend a Forest Plan amendment to waive some elements of S&G WL-54.

Additional documents for this project will be placed on the Forest Service web site at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/projects/units/bendrock/index.shtml, as they become available.

Invitation to Comment

We are informing you about this proposal so that you can provide comments to us. Your comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal, so please keep them as specific as possible. They will also become a matter of public record. The planning process will include considering input we receive, as well as conducting any necessary surveys for wildlife, sensitive plants, heritage or other resources. A notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement was published in the Federal Register on April 4, 2008, and we expect to have a Draft EIS available for review later this year. There will be an opportunity to comment again at that time.

Written or verbal comments are both welcome and should be returned to us by May 12, 2008. Written comments should be addressed to Phil Cruz, District Ranger, at the address on this letterhead. We will also accept correspondence at the following email address: comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock@fs.fed.us. Please put "Deadlog Scoping Comments" in the subject line of your email.

If you have any questions, additional information can be provided by Mark Macfarlane, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, at 541-383-4044 or Beth Peer, Environmental Coordinator, at 541-383-4069.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Phil Cruz*
PHIL CRUZ
District Ranger